

**Testimony of Durelle Demarkey**  
**Appropriations Committee**  
**February 15, 2013**

Thank you members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Durelle Demarkey and I live in Middletown, Connecticut. I am here today to urge you to restore the cuts issued to Connecticut Legal Rights Project in the Governor's proposed budget because their services have truly helped me.

I contacted CLRP after I received a Notice to Quit from my landlord. I lived at Fernwood Apartments in Middletown for eleven years and always paid my rent on time, but the property was sold several times while I lived there. This caused a lot of confusion and stress for me and other tenants. I resolved my issue with my landlord, but they wanted to charge me attorney's fees for the Notice to Quit. I live on a fixed income and did not have the money to pay the attorney's fees, nor did I think I should have to, since the issue with my landlord was resolved. I also wanted to move from my apartment and I was concerned that the landlord would not allow me to move if I didn't pay the charges. I was also scared that they would subtract the fees from my security deposit, which I needed in order to move. The whole situation was very stressful for me. I wanted to leave but felt trapped and I wasn't getting anywhere by talking to the property management company about my concerns. They were disrespectful and ignored me.

CLRP went to bat for me and sent a letter to my landlord explaining why the charges should be removed. They also asked that the landlord release me from my lease so that I could move somewhere that would be better for me. After CLRP sent their letter, the landlord signed paperwork stating that I didn't owe them any money. This helped me in two ways. First, I was relieved that I didn't have to pay for this charge. CLRP explained to me that since the landlord had not actually started a court action to evict me, it was improper for the landlord to pass the attorneys fees on to me. Second, I was able to move out and find a new apartment. I am very happy where I am now.

Without CLRP, I would be homeless. Moving on has improved my mental health and I couldn't have fought this battle on my own. I probably would have felt pressured to pay the attorneys fees out of fear that my landlord would evict me, and paying the charge would have impacted my ability to purchase necessities like food and pay for my utilities.

I am a well educated person who fell on hard times, not unlike many others. I also consider myself to be a good self-advocate. But I found myself in a situation where I was caught between a rock and a hard place and was being bullied by my landlord to pay this charge. I am so grateful that I had CLRP to help me. In my life, I have sometimes felt shame and embarrassment about reaching out and asking for help, but CLRP made me feel like my issue was important and fought for my rights as hard as they could.

CLRP has really made a difference in my life and I don't know what I would have done without them. Any further cuts would be devastating to people like me. We need more services and advocates to help us, not less. Thank you for your time and consideration.